SIX GREAT DOCTRINES

Dr. Carl S. Patton

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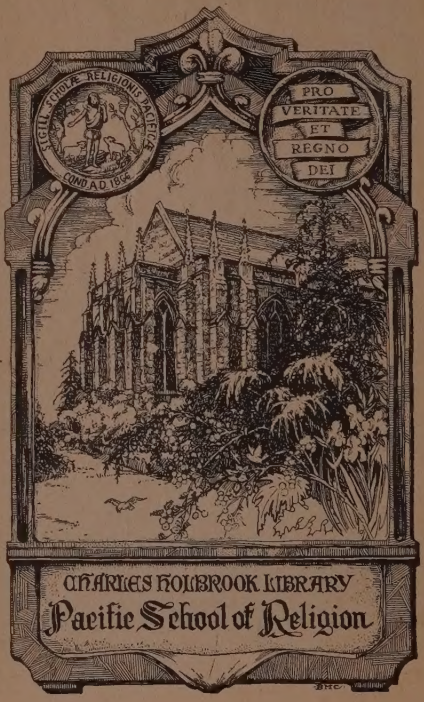

GIFT OF
Kenneth James Saunders

SIX GREAT DOCTRINES

A Series of Lenten Sermons given in 1924
at the First Congregational Church
Los Angeles, California

BY

DR. CARL S. PATTON

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PREFACE.

The following chapters contain the substance of six Lenten sermons given in the Spring of 1924. The subjects are old and familiar. It would be quite impossible for anyone to say anything concerning them that is not already well known. Most of what I say every preacher has said many times. They are the things that have to be said over and over again.

Chapter I. The Fatherhood of God.
Chapter II. The Divinity of Christ.
Chapter III. The Holy Spirit.
Chapter IV. The Atonement.
Chapter V. Salvation.
Chapter VI. Immortality.

CHAPTER I.

The Fatherhood of God.

There is a certain shadow that hangs over the word "fatherhood" because of the way in which many of us have fulfilled our function of fatherhood. We are often impatient with our children. We often misunderstand them, perhaps because they are too much like ourselves. We are arbitrary with them. We want them to do what we want them to do just because we want them to do it. We are sometimes harsh with them, generally without intending it. There is no state that has not had to step in and curb the cruelty of fathers.

But fatherhood is the best word we have with which to describe God. If the theologies of the world had been written by women instead of by men, there is a better name by which we might describe God. We men would be the first to admit there is a depth to the word "motherhood" which does not quite get into that of "fatherhood." But fatherhood is the word we use.

It is the word Jesus liked best. When He used the word God, it was generally in a more or less technical expression such as the "kingdom of God." When He talked out of His own heart freely with the people, the name He always used was "Your Father in heaven."

There was no indication that Jesus thought of God as His own Father alone and not the Father of those around Him; or as the Father only of those who believe in Him and receive Him kindly, but not the Father of all men. The prodigal son did not cease to be a son, no matter how far away he had gone. He brought a blot on his father's name. He was a poor son, a disgraceful son, a despised son, feeding the swine, but he was still the son of his father. We do not cease to be children of

God because we do not behave ourselves like children. The prodigal son was still a son while he was making a fool of himself, and it was the realization of who he was, and who his father was, that finally brought him to himself and took him home.

The first thing we mean when we call God our Father is that there is something human about Him. When you lose the human element out of any relation, you lose what makes it finest and best. If every king could always have been a real father to his people, there never would have been any revolutions in the world. What we object to in the policeman is not that he should stop us when we have run by a boulevard, or a school stop, but that he does not always treat us like human beings or act like one himself. He appears like an automaton in brass buttons, and pushes us around like furniture, and whistles to us as he would to a dog. He might at least be human about it. When you lose the human element you lose the best there is.

There is no sphere in which the human element has been so often lost as in religion. And there is no place where the loss is so great. The fatherhood of God means that man is like God and God is like man. All that we know of love, all that we plan of duty, all that we hope of heaven, we have learned of men. Man is the supreme revelation of God in the world. If God made man in His image, then man is not only like God but God is also like man.

There are people who believe that God did once tell the soldiers of an oriental tribe to kill all the women and the children. And there are still people who believe that the larger part of the human race was made for no better purpose than to be burned up;—that we are only here on probation, and that what we do here will determine our happiness or our misery in the world to come. These people do not understand that God has something human about Him. There is a human element in religion which ought to be kept for us in the fatherhood of God.

The fatherhood of God means, in the next place, that God is always doing and always will do for us everything that is good for us and that He can do. We do not always do this for our children. Many men wear themselves out laying up money for their children which will spoil the children after they get it. Some of us would be foolish enough, if we could, to take out some form of insurance for our children by which, so long as they lived, they might be spared any great temptation or deep trouble or great sorrow. But if we could do this, we should only be doing our children the least possible service that we could. God will not do anything to us which is not good for a father to do for his children.

There are many things which no father can do for his children. God might almost wish He could give us character, but He cannot do it. Character is the building of the soul. You take what comes to you every day and do your duty, and character is the result. Goodness never comes to us except by experience, bitter as well as sweet. God cannot give us goodness, for nobody can be good for anybody except himself. Goodness and wisdom and patience and all spiritual qualities have to be worked out in the human soul itself.

But whatever God can do and ought to do for us He always does. You can imagine a father who knows what he ought to do for his children but will not do it because they are foolish enough not to know that they need it, or lazy enough not to have spoken to him about it, or too careless even to have spoken to him at all. But God is doing all that He can do for us all the time. I do not see why a man who truly believes in the fatherhood of God should feel it necessary to tease God, to persuade Him, to wrestle with Him. You do not have to do that with your own father if he is any kind of a father at all. Why should it be necessary to beg or explain or insist upon anything with God? He is my father. He knows me. He knows the world in which He has put me. He will never cease to do all He can and ought to for me.

But most of all the fatherhood of God means that He

trusts us. That is where some of us fail with our children. I have never known a boy to go to the bad because his father had too much confidence in him, nor to go right because his father was suspicious and distrustful of him. The Bible says that we love God because He first loved us. That is a great and consoling truth. But it goes still deeper that we can believe in God because God Himself first believed in us. That is why God will never compel or bribe or force us to do anything. Oh! the wonderful confidence that God puts in every one of us! He says to me, "Here is this equipment that I have given you. It isn't much but it is all I can do for you. Now, I won't watch you, I won't compel you, I won't bribe you, I won't scare you into being good. Help Me in the building of My kingdom in the earth." When I hear that voice perfectly clearly, a wonderful confidence comes out of the heart of the Infinite and enters into my heart. Temptations come, but I remember that Somebody has a wonderful, an infinite, confidence in me. It would be a shame and a crime if I should abuse that confidence.

Jesus won men because He had a confidence in them like God Himself. He gathered men around Him, uneducated, weak men, and held them by His trust in them. He organized no society, drew up no constitution, laid down no rules. He said to the men around Him, "You are My friends, this is what I am in the world for, and you are here to help Me." And that great and wonderful confidence which Jesus had in His disciples, remade the spiritual life of the world. God is like Jesus in this, also.

When I think of the fatherhood of God, religion seems to me so simple that I wonder that there ever has been a human being in the world who did not understand it, or who was in doubt about it, or who for any reason turned his back upon it. If God were an infinite policeman, waiting to pounce upon us when we have stopped for a moment, soul or body, in the wrong place;—if He were a great judge, sitting upon a throne up in the skies, with His scouts out watching us and

reporting to Him all that we do amiss, so that He might check it up against us; if He were a "high and mighty ruler of the universe," then religion might be a complicated and an unlovely thing; but with God as our Father, irreligion is absurd. Does any honor come to you from ignoring your father or from keeping up all your life a running quarrel with him? Irreligion is simply the attempt to ignore the fact that God is your Father.

I have this thing to say to you, therefore. Never substitute any other idea for the idea of the fatherhood of God. Never let go of that idea. Everything is possible between people who understand one another. If God is the infinite Source of wisdom and goodness and love, and if I can understand His plans for the world, if I can enter into those plans and He can use me, then religion is not only a simple but a wonderful thing. If God is our Father we must accept our part of the responsibility implied in that relationship. It is a sobering thought that the carelessness with which I live may go beyond the confines of this little world and affect the happiness of God Himself.

In picturing the fatherhood of God, I think of many men who have been like a father to me. I think of the man who, before I graduated from the theological school, had confidence enough in me to send me down to preach in a church where he had once been minister. I think of the man who, without much profession of godliness, was a disciple of the Great Physician and in his tenderness and thoughtfulness was like a father to me and to my family.

I think of many other men; of the man, for instance, who was going along the streets of New Orleans one day and saw a boy crawling out of a hogshead and took that boy to his home, gave him his name, educated him, and saw him become Sir Henry M. Stanley, the great explorer. I think of the English judge who found before him a little slip of a Salvation Army lass who had been arrested for "obstructing the traffic." It was forty or fifty years ago, when the Salvation Army had just been organized and people showed it little respect. The

officers handled the girl roughly, the barristers questioned her rudely, and the old judge left his bench and went down and stood beside her in the dock till her trial was finished. Not a word did he say, not a word was necessary,—it was obvious that he was playing the part of a father to her.

But I think most lovingly of all, of my own father. Whether he was so wise and able a man as my boyish idea made him, I shall never know. I know that no impatient word did I ever hear from him. No hasty judgment came forth from his lips. I never told my father that I loved him. I didn't know how to. I hope he knows how I love him and how I have missed him and how I still miss him. And I hope he knows that what is good in me goes back mostly to him.

But a man grows up and goes half way across the continent from his father, and his correspondence with him grows casual, and the first thing he knows a telegram comes saying that his father is gone. But we have a Father from whom we never need to be separated, from whom indeed we cannot be separated, and Who makes this little journey through life glorious with His presence. What is there simpler or easier than that we should all our days walk in that comradeship which is better than all other comradeships? And as to what happens to us after we go to sleep in this world, we know not much, not much: but this certainly, that whatever other world we wake up in will be full of the presence and blessing of the Father of mankind, and we shall be there as we are in this world, the children of the one great Father in heaven.

CHAPTER II.

The Divinity of Christ.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."
2 Corinthians 5:19.

The phrase, "the divinity of Christ," is not found in the New Testament. But the idea of the divinity of Christ has been constant in Christianity from the start.

If I should ask you whether you believe in the divinity of Christ, you might be anxious to show how completely you do believe in it, and you might say, "Yes; I believe that Jesus was equal to God." But if I should ask you, "Do you believe that He was equal to God in power?" you would probably hesitate. Some power Jesus did have, probably over nature, certainly over the human soul, which is not given to us ordinary mortals. It was given to Him by some providence of God, or came to Him as the natural result of the purity of His spirit and the completeness of His union with the Father. But that Jesus, while He walked around the towns and villages of Galilee, had in His hand, or His mind, or mysteriously tucked away somewhere else in the folds of His personality, the omnipotent power that made and constantly remakes the world, that keeps the stars in their courses, and the tides flowing in the ocean, and causes all things visible and invisible to be what they are,—that He had the power of God, is certainly not indicated by any word Jesus ever spoke, nor by any incident in the gospels, and is a gratuitous assumption which there is nothing to support. No, Jesus was not equal to God in power; and to picture Him so would only destroy His humanity.

If I ask you whether Jesus was equal to God in knowledge, you would probably end by answering that question also in the negative. We think of God as omniscient. But that whole

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body of modern knowledge which has grown up since Jesus' time, modern astronomy, modern physics, modern science generally, there is no reason to suppose that Jesus knew anything about. To have known all this would have done Him no good, and would only have alienated Him in sympathy from the world in which He lived. About all ordinary matters, I suppose Jesus was learning all His life. He knew more at twenty than He did at ten, and more at thirty than at twenty. But He died at thirty. And if He had lived on till He was forty or fifty, He would certainly have continued to learn during those years: He could not have stood still for all that time. Then, certainly, when He died at thirty, He did not already know those particular things which He would have learned in the next ten or twenty years if He had lived that much longer. Then there must have been many things that He did not know. There is His own statement, "Of that day knoweth no man, not even the Son, but the Father only." There is the consistent picture of His own life; He was surprised, He was disappointed; with all His insight into the human soul He made one mistake in His choice of disciples; and everywhere He acts like a man who has to learn, like the rest of us, by experience.

If under the stress of considerations like these, you take back your statement that Jesus was equal to God, you will only be doing what the Church herself has often done; for she has always declared that any affirmation of the divinity of Christ that denied His humanity is a heresy. It is the divinity of a human, and not of a non-human Christ, which the Church has always asserted. She has never forgotten that Jesus' only name for Himself was "the Son of Man."

I am ready now to make my own statement of the divinity of Christ; and I hope it will not seem to any of you too strong for you to follow, or too weak to be sufficient; I hope, indeed, that it may appeal to all of you as what you yourselves already think.

The divinity of Christ means that God dwelt in Jesus, that God spoke in Jesus, that God revealed Himself in Jesus; that the word of Jesus was the word of God, and the deed of Jesus was the deed of God, that the patience of Jesus was the patience of God, and the forgiveness of Jesus was the forgiveness of God, and the spirit of Jesus was the spirit of God. It means that that harmony and communion and fellowship with God for which the rest of us strive, which we reach now and then for an hour or a moment but which quickly goes from us again, was habitual with Jesus, and that from first to last no alienation from the Father found place in His heart.

I may say this in another way. God was revealed in Jesus. He is revealed in humanity at large. But He is most revealed in the best and finest of humanity. To say that He was not revealed in Jesus is to say that He has never appeared in connection with this human life of ours; and that is to make Him, not merely an "absentee God" but a pure abstraction. God was revealed in Jesus. But no man can reveal anything other than what is in him, nor other than what in the last analysis he himself is. When the fool tries to reveal wisdom, or the ignoramus tries to reveal knowledge, or any other man tries to reveal what is not in him, he is soon discovered. Jesus could not reveal God unless God was in Him.

We may say another thing; we often do say it; that IF God were to live a human life He would live such a life as Jesus lived,—loving, just, forgiving, like the life of Jesus. But since God does live more or less in every human life, therefore we must say more than IF He lived a human life it would be like the life of Jesus; we must say that He did live in Jesus, and that the life of Jesus was the life of God lived within human limitations.

If this is what the divinity of Christ is, it is not primarily a theological doctrine, based upon proof texts or worked out in the library or the class-room. It is a matter of fact, and of history and human experience. As a matter of fact people do

find God in Jesus Christ. They wonder about God, about what He is like and how He feels toward His children, and then they read the life of Jesus and they find their questions answered. As a matter of history and human experience, wherever else we find God, we find Him most in Jesus Christ.

But this divinity of Jesus is a spiritual, not a physical, matter. And here I come upon a subject which I would gladly let alone if it had not recently been made a matter of so much controversy. It is the subject of the virgin birth of Jesus. I cannot but believe that this entire matter has been magnified into an importance which it does not in any way deserve. For it does not seem to me to have anything to do with belief in the divinity of Jesus. The apostle Paul certainly believed in that divinity. Without ever stopping to define it, his epistles are full of it. He is indeed the man who, more than all others, and in time before all others, started the Christian world in this belief. Yet he never mentions the virgin birth. Again and again he comes around in his argument to where it would be natural, almost inevitable, for him to mention it. But he never does. When he speaks of Jesus as "born of a woman, born under the law," the natural inference is that he thought of Him as having been born as other men are. One may of course say that Paul knew the story of the virgin birth, but that he did not mention it, because he took it for granted, or for some other reason did not think it worth mentioning. But there is certainly no indication that he had ever heard the story, and the assumption that he knew it but forbore to speak of it, is an assumption pure and simple. It is much more natural to suppose that he was a stranger to it. But whether he was or not, it is perfectly plain that he believed in the divinity of Jesus but that he did not rest that belief upon the virgin birth.

The same argument applies to Mark, who begins his story of the life of Jesus with the baptism. If it is true, as an old tradition has it, that Peter stands behind the gospel of Mark, then the story which Mark received from Peter had nothing

in it about the birth from a virgin. Still more obvious is it that the author of the Fourth Gospel believed in the divinity of Jesus. Indeed, in this gospel the highest conception of Jesus finds expression; it is the gospel of the supreme exaltation of Jesus. Yet there is no mention in it of the virgin birth.

I am not insisting, though to me it seems likely, that neither Paul nor Mark nor Peter nor John, ever heard of the virgin birth. I am only insisting that they all had an exalted conception of Jesus best described by the word "divinity," but that none of them rested this conception on the story of His birth from a virgin. If it is to be said these days that people do not believe in the divinity of Jesus who do not believe in His virgin birth, or who do not identify the two things, this stricture should apply equally to the New Testament writers. But it is absurd for anyone to impugn the belief of these men in the divinity of Jesus. One who believes in the divinity of Jesus but declines to rest that belief on the virgin birth, merely takes his stand with Paul and Mark and Peter and John.

If there were any clear word about this whole matter from Mary, or from Joseph, or from Peter, or from anyone closely associated with Jesus; if Mark who stood closest of the evangelists to Him in time, or if John who knew Him best, or James who was His own brother, or, better still, if Jesus Himself had only made some unmistakable reference to it, one might feel different about it all. But since the only references to it are in two verses of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, these two verses occurring in portions of those gospels which are often regarded as having been written later than the gospels themselves; and since even those two gospels, after they have made their references to the virgin birth, proceed throughout the rest of their story without any apparent consciousness of what they have said in their introductions, one may now set the story of the virgin birth down as an attempt of a generation later than that of the apostles or of the first evangelists, to explain the wonderful power and influence

of Jesus by the theory of His supernatural birth. Such a story would probably never have arisen on Jewish soil. It has a Greek sound. And it probably did not arise till the gospel had been pretty well domesticated on Greek soil.

I am not interested in disproving the story of the virgin birth. Whoever finds it easy or helpful to believe it will believe it. Or whoever feels that he has to believe it out of deference to the authority of the New Testament, will believe it. And anybody who wants to believe it or feels he ought to believe it, should be encouraged to do so. What I object to is the implication that the only believers in the divinity of Christ are those who also accept as historical the story of His birth from a virgin. I object to the identification of the divinity of Christ with a question of the "domestic relations of Mary and Joseph." When you shrink the glorious doctrine of the divinity of Jesus to the compass of a story about something that did or did not happen to His mother before He was born, you are robbing it of its spiritual value. The divinity of Jesus is a moral and spiritual, not a physical, matter.

So when I ask you, "Do you believe in the divinity of Jesus?" what I mean is, Do you believe that the life that Jesus lived was the life that God would live in the world? Do you believe that at the heart of God there are the same patience, the same solicitude for men, the same anxiety to do justice, the same divine desire to seek and to save the lost, which were so conspicuous in Jesus? Is God, to you, like Jesus,—loving, just, true? Can we trust Him as people trusted Jesus? Can we come to Him unfrightened and unashamed, as people came to Jesus? Does Jesus, spiritually, stand to you for God among us men? And if He does; if you find yourself thinking about God in terms of the earthly and human life and character of Jesus; if you believe that you will receive at the hands of God the same sort of treatment which men and women, as good and as bad as you are, received from Jesus, then do not trouble yourself about definitions, and do not let anybody impugn your convictions; you believe in the divinity of Jesus.

CHAPTER III.

The Holy Spirit

"The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law."
—Galatians 5:22, 23.

There is no mention of "the Holy Spirit" in the Old Testament. There is, indeed, frequent mention of the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of Jehovah, and some of these mentions are such as to cause us a good deal of surprise. In the book of Exodus, God says, "I have put my spirit upon Bezaleel, the son of Uri, to teach him how to work all kind of cunning works in bronze and metal and wood." At another time Jehovah is represented as saying to Moses, "The work you are trying to do is altogether too much for you. If you will gather together the seventy elders of Israel at a certain time and place, I will come down and I will take of the spirit that is upon you and put it upon the seventy elders, and they can do what you are now doing by yourself." There is the old "Judge," Othniel, about whom we know practically nothing, except that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he judged Israel forty years." There is Jephthah, old heathen, who killed his daughter because he had made a vow to kill the first thing that met him when he returned. Yet "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah and he passed over until he came to Ammon." And there is Samson, an absolute heathen if there ever was one, and yet he, of all men, is singled out as most frequently receiving the Spirit of Jehovah. He went to Timnath to see a certain woman, and a young lion came out of the woods, and "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and

he tore him as a man would tear a kid." He went to Ashkelon, and "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him," and he slew thirty men. The Philistines bound him with cords, and "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he tore them off as if they had been burned with fire." Saul sent messengers to David to take him, and when they met a band of prophets coming from the hills, the Spirit of the Lord came upon the messengers, and they began to sing and dance, and prophesy. He sent other messengers, and the same fate befell them. Then Saul went himself, and he also met a band of prophets, and "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Saul, and he began to sing and dance, and fell down naked all day."

Although we come in the later parts of the Old Testament to a much more exalted conception of the Spirit of Jehovah, there remains much of this physical and pre-Christian element in it. For instance, when Elijah says to the servant of Ahab, "Go and tell your master I will be here if he wants to see me in an hour or a day from now," the servant says to Elijah, "No, I will not, for as soon as my back is turned, the Spirit of the Lord will catch you up and take you I know not where, and when Ahab comes he will not find you."

So in the early times the Spirit of the Lord was thought of as a physical thing, that was liable to come on you any time and do strange things to you, but that had little appreciable connection with your moral character or your spiritual ideals.

When we come to the New Testament, we begin to hear about "the Holy Spirit." The reason the Spirit of God in the New Testament is called "the Holy Spirit," as it is not in the Old Testament, is simple enough. In the Old Testament times, the Jews did not know anything about demons and spirits generally. They believed that occasionally an evil spirit came forth from Jehovah and entered the heart of a man like Saul, but he was a spirit subject to Jehovah and not a demon acting on his own behalf. But toward the latter part of the Old Testament times, the Israelites came in contact

with the Chaldeans and Persians. From them they learned much about all sorts of evil spirits. The Persians had a whole catalogue of evil spirits, and knew not only the names of these spirits, but what each of them was supposed to do. When you come to New Testament times, you find the Jews also believing in demons and evil spirits. These spirits could get inside of folks and had to be expelled. Most nervous and mental disorders, the Jews of New Testament times explained by saying the sick man had an evil spirit. And because in the New Testament times the people had begun to believe in many spirits, most of them evil, therefore they began to call the Spirit of the Lord, by way of distinction, "the Holy Spirit."

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is generally referred to, not as a person, not as God, but as an influence or power that comes forth from God and enters into the hearts of men. It was said that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit," "anointed with the Holy Spirit." John said of him, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is referred to as a gift from God. It is referred to as a spirit and not as a personality, much less as a personality on a par with God Himself.

But after New Testament times, Christian thought underwent the transformation which issued in the doctrine of the Trinity. The result of that was the declaration that there are three persons in the Godhead. By the word persons the Church fathers did not mean at all what we mean now. They did not mean there were three persons in one person or three Gods somehow knit up into one. They did not mean the kind of confusion that has come over the Christian world in regard to the Trinity, because of the use of this unfortunate word person, which meant one thing at the time the doctrine of the Trinity arose, and which in English means an entirely different thing now. The Trinity, in its origin, was not an arithmetic puzzle. One does not wish to speak lightly of a doctrine which once meant so much, but certainly the doctrine of the Trinity is the last kind of an idea of God which it would occur to us

to make these days from what we know of our own spiritual life and of the universe in which we live. It belongs to the fourth century of the Christian era, and it rightly interprets the thought of that time. But I do not believe it is a doctrine which people readily understand these days, and most of those who pride themselves most strongly upon being trinitarians can be counted upon not to understand what the doctrine meant when it arose in the fourth century of the Christian era. But it is to the doctrine of the Trinity that we owe the idea that the Holy Spirit is God.

As a boy, I never heard anything about the Holy Spirit. My father's preaching had much to do with God and a great deal to do with Jesus Christ, but nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. When I went away from home and began to hear other preachers, I began to hear about the Holy Spirit. Some of the things I heard troubled me a good deal. The Holy Spirit was supposed to be the agent in conversion. As I had been converted but had heard nothing about the Holy Spirit in connection with it, I wondered whether I had been truly converted. When I got into revival meetings, I heard the revivalist say the Holy Spirit was "hovering over" the town, "ready to descend" upon it. If we did not hold up our hands or sign cards as we were asked to do, we were given to understand that the Holy Spirit was liable to be grieved and to withdraw from the community. Great stress was laid upon the fact that if He did withdraw, nobody knew when He would be back again.

All this puzzled me a good deal. What disturbed me still more was the statement that there was a sin against the Holy Spirit. As nobody knew exactly what this sin was, nobody really knew whether he had committed it or not. One might have committed it without knowing it. This seemed queer, for it was the worst of all sins, and could never be forgiven. Once or twice I heard that the sin against the Holy Spirit consisted in denying He was a person, and speaking of Him as though He were a thing or anything less than a person. I

didn't get any very great help at home about all this. I once wrote to my father about it, but all he said was, "God I know and Christ I know, but who is the Holy Spirit?" Since he was thirty years older and a much wiser and better man than I was, and seemed to be no better informed about the Holy Spirit than I was, I didn't allow myself to be too much troubled about it.

The worst thing that ever happened to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was when the Greek word translated spirit was in certain places in the New Testament translated ghost. Ghost used to mean the same as spirit. In the olden times they used to say "ghostly comfort" or "ghostly gifts," where we would say "spiritual comfort" or "spiritual gifts." When the New Testament was translated into the King James version, ghost and spirit were interchangeable terms. But "ghost" has developed a meaning of its own. Most folks do not believe there is any such thing as a ghost. But if there were, a ghost would be the spirit, the disembodied spirit of a man who is dead. If there is any spirit that can rise from the grave and wander around and rattle the blinds and put out the light, that is a ghost. And it is particularly unfortunate that the Holy Spirit should ever be called a ghost. For if God is anything at all, there are two things He is not: He is not dead and He is not disembodied. God is a spirit, but not the disembodied spirit of a being who is dead. God is living and has a body. God lives in nature, and when you come down around the La Cañada curves or stand on the cliffs overlooking the ocean, and a well known feeling of elation comes into your heart, and you say, "I am going to be from now on strong and clean and honest like nature itself," that is the Holy Spirit in you. God lives in Humanity, and when you read the history of the human family and see the hard path it has climbed and the height to which it has come, and a great ambition rises in you to contribute what you can to the progress of the human species and do nothing unworthy of a man or woman, that is the Holy Spirit speaking through humanity to you.

God lives in all great and good men, and when you read again the life of Abraham Lincoln or of some less conspicuous but equally good man, and there comes into your heart a sense of shame for the littleness of which you are guilty, that is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. God lives in the high reaches of human art; and when you look at St. Gaudens' statue of the Puritan and see those broad-flung shoulders and that high forehead and firm chin, and you say to yourself, "I am going to walk down the path the rest of my life as fearless, as upstanding, as high-minded as a Puritan," that is the Spirit of God speaking to you. Or when you look at the picture of Whistler's mother, and think of the passion and joy and pain and the sorrow and the solicitude that have gone into the making of a great mother of men, and a tenderness comes over your heart and a shame at anything you may ever have done that you ought not to have done; when you hear the choir singing, "Listen to the Lambs," and it comes over you that at the heart of the universe there is a great solicitude for every human soul, One who listens forever to your cry and your complaint, and in His heart there is no bitterness and no inattention;—that is the Holy Spirit speaking to you again. And He speaks not only from outside, but from within; and when you came home years ago from school, and told your father your first lie and made a bungle of it as we all did, and he looked at you in that peculiar way of his and you felt the blood rising in your cheeks and knew exactly what he was thinking, that was the Holy Spirit rebuking you for being a liar. And when your children were born, and a large part of the carelessness and inefficiency you had managed to carry along up to that time began to drop away from you, that was the Holy Spirit speaking again, not only to you, but in you.

It might be better these days not to speak of the Holy Spirit at all, but just to speak of God. For God is a spirit; and by the Holy Spirit we do not mean the Spirit of God who Himself is a spirit, but we mean God. Yet the phrase has some advantages. For by it we mean God as He is active in

human life and nature at the present time. If we spoke only of God, then we might fall into the error of thinking that God was a long way off, the force that made and rules the physical universe, and we might forget He is here and now. If we spoke of Jesus Christ only we might fall into the error of thinking that God did have some connection with humanity itself two thousand years ago in one corner of Palestine, and that after that He retired from active life. The advantage of the expression "the Holy Spirit" is that it ought to make us remember that God is in us and all around us all the time.

There is one disadvantage about the whole doctrine of the Holy Spirit that goes very far to over-balance any good that comes from it. That is, the teaching about the sin against the Holy Spirit, or against the Holy Ghost (for so the word is translated in that place). If only the folks who have done something bad would be convicted of this sin against the Holy Ghost, which is said to have no forgiveness in this world or any other; if the folks who steal money and hold up defenseless people on the street at night, or abuse and oppress the poor, or slander their neighbors: if murderers and cut-throats and black-legs, could only get it into their heads they had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, it might not be so bad. But the only people who are afraid they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost are gentle old ladies who never did a wrong thing in their lives, or high-minded, spiritual men, over-conscientious, and over-anxious lest they should have done something wrong without even knowing it. Quite absurd. All the wrong you have done without knowing it, you need not worry yourself about. But it is the people who never have done anything specially bad, who are always disturbed about the sin against the Holy Ghost. I have never known one single person who was withheld from any bad thing he would like to do because he was afraid he might commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. Whenever any man goes to the asylum, as most folks do who think they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, the trouble is not

that he has committed any sin, but that he is nervously and mentally unbalanced. If there is any single statement in the New Testament which can, without offence, be said to have done a great deal of harm and no good at all, I should be willing to say (nobody else needs to say it) that it is the statement about the sin against the Holy Ghost.

I have heard the sin against the Holy Ghost explained in various ways. The explanation commonly given is, that if you look at goodness and know perfectly well that it is goodness, and turn your back upon it and call it evil, that is the sin against the Holy Ghost. But that doesn't mean anything very much, because that is what we all do up to a certain point when we do anything that is wrong. And if Jesus wanted to say that, He certainly could have said it. And if God is the God of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Father of the human spirit, there is no sin against any human being, against Christ, against God Himself, no sin of any kind, that He would not forgive instantly upon repentance. If you could have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and if you should have gone to hell for it and should have repented there, you would have been forgiven instanter. No sin in the universe is proof against repentance and forgiveness. The idea that the Holy Ghost is a person extremely touchy about His reputation, as the German Emperor used to be, who is listening to see if anybody says anything against His character, or somebody calls Him "it," when He ought to be called "Him," or fails to understand what He is doing and what is His peculiar place in the universe, waiting to find somebody doing that and to mark down against him a sin that will never be forgiven, is a pure piece of heathenism without any spirit of Christianity whatever.

I have my own theory about how this statement came to be in the Bible, about the sin against the Holy Ghost. You may agree with it or not, as you choose. But I think that various things were read back into the mind of Jesus from the apostolic age, and I think the only two times where you find

Jesus speaking about the Holy Spirit, it is perfectly clear that this is what has happened. When Jesus says, "Go and baptize all men in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," He is represented as using a phrase which did not arise until years after His death, but that was read back unconsciously into His mouth because at the time the Gospel was written it was a popular phrase. All the early Christian baptism was in the name of Christ alone. So, in that phrase where Jesus is represented as speaking of the sin against the Holy Spirit, I believe there is read into His mind an idea which He never entertained, but which arose in the early Church. Mark says anybody can say anything against Christ who wants to and that will be forgiven. But if he says anything against the Holy Spirit, that will not be forgiven. That saying dates from the time when the Holy Spirit was regarded as the peculiar possession of the Church of Christ. One might speak against Christ because he had never known Him, and therefore might deserve to be forgiven;—but a man who spoke against the Holy Spirit would be speaking against that power of God which was at work in the church, which had called the church out of heathenism, which constituted and inspired the church. This would be the supreme sin because it would be a blow at the very life of the Church. And this idea that the supreme sin was for a Christian to speak against the power which had held together and inspired the church, was read back into the mind of Jesus. This explanation you do not have to take unless it looks good to you. But what you will have to take, if you believe in a God as good as Jesus, is that there is no sin of any kind, anywhere, that is incapable of repentance and forgiveness.

The meaning (to come back) of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that God is here. And this is the greatest and most wonderful fact about this whole life we live and the world in which we live it; God is here. We do not have to wait till we get into some other world to know Him. He is here. He works in human history. He speaks to us out of nature and

the human soul. He is around us and in us. He is here, not to scare us, not to hold over our heads some eternal doom for some sin that we do not understand and that we may have committed without knowing it. But He is here to help us and to bless us, and whenever we do fail and come short, He is here to exercise His infinite mercy and forgiveness upon us.

CHAPTER IV.

The Atonement.

"We also rejoice in God through Jesus Christ our Lord by whom we have received the atonement."

—Romans 5:11.

Considering the large place the doctrine of the atonement has held in the Christian life, it is a little surprising that the word atonement occurs this once only in the New Testament. The Greek word here translated atonement occurs several other times but is otherwise translated. "Atonement" is not a New Testament word. But the idea of atonement has held a central place throughout the history of Christian thought.

Christianity has no monopoly upon the idea of atonement. Judaism had such a doctrine in the Old Testament times. Buddhism and Mohammedanism, the Celtic, Greek, Roman, Hindoo and Vedic religions all had doctrines of atonement.

So far as Christendom is concerned, the doctrine of atonement seems to go back not to Jesus but to the Apostle Paul. Paul was a Jew, and central in the Jewish religion was the system of sacrifice. When Paul became a Christian, his task was to hitch Christianity onto the Jewish system; and he hitched it on in a perfectly natural place and perfectly natural way. The old system of sacrifice, like the rest of the law, passed away for Paul, with the coming of Christianity. Paul said, "Jesus is our sacrifice. Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us." He had so much of the poet and so little of the system-maker in him, and he wrote in such a voluminous and at the same time in such a haphazard way, that there has always been and is now great difference of opinion as to exactly what Paul meant about the sacrifice of Christ. But it is perfectly plain that to the Apostle Paul, the death of Jesus

had made it easy for people to come to God without the ancient sacrificial or legal system. Perhaps, even, he thought it had made a difference in the feeling of God toward man, though of that one can hardly be sure. At all events, the idea of the atonement in the Christian religion started from the Apostle Paul.

But a hard-and-fast "doctrine" of atonement Paul did not have. That did not appear until somewhere around the year 200. The great church father, Origen, developed a doctrine which seems crude enough to us, but which was perfectly natural for him and his time. This doctrine was that, by the sin of Adam, Satan had acquired a proprietorship of the human spirit. God offered Satan the soul of Jesus as a ransom for mankind. God knew that Satan was cheating himself in this bargain because he would be unable to hold Jesus. Satan finally was cheated both out of the soul of Jesus and the souls of other men. By the resurrection Jesus broke the power of death and of Satan, who was thus left without anything to represent his equity in the human family. Gregory the First was fond of expatiating on this latter element in the doctrine. It showed how wise and cunning God was, that He had allowed Satan to deceive himself in this bargain and so to come out of it with nothing at all. If that seems strange to us, we must remember that in the olden time one was expected to treat his friend fairly, but his enemy as unfairly as he could. It was no sin to deceive the devil.

This doctrine, the ransom paid to the devil, was held for eight hundred or nine hundred years. About 1100 A.D., Anselm developed the idea that every man owes to God a perfect obedience, but no man can be perfectly obedient to God: therefore, every man falls in debt to God; and, since God is an infinite person, every debt to God is an infinite debt. Somebody must pay this debt for a man or it will be collected of the man himself. Its natural payment would be by the death of every human soul, since all souls are infinitely in debt to God. Christ offered to pay this debt. Since He was

a person of infinite worth, He could pay with His one death the debt which all men owe to God.

This theory may also seem to us strange in some respects, but it was certainly a great advance upon the earlier one. For upon this theory the difference is no longer between God and the devil, but between the love and the justice of God. For five hundred years this general idea of the atonement prevailed.

Then the great Dutch theologian, Grotius, about 1600, developed the "governmental" theory. According to this theory, God is not the offended party. He is not the person to whom you have done wrong, and who is angry about it, to whom you owe something which He is bound to collect either of you or somebody else. God is the moral governor of the universe, and the wrong you have done is to the majesty of the moral law. The moral law must be enforced, and just as any city that had a law against theft but freely forgave every man who stole anything, if he only became penitent and asked forgiveness, would soon see an end to the sacredness of property and respect for law, the moral universe would disintegrate if God did not respect His own law. He, therefore, could not forgive people with perfect freedom until the death of Christ paid the honor due to the divine law, and made it possible for Him to forgive. In one form or another, this "moral government" theory has lasted practically down to the present time.

Certain permanent ideas underlying any and all doctrines of the atonement stand out clearly enough. That God is infinitely interested in the welfare, and especially in the moral progress of His children, and that He will put Himself to any sacrifice or loss to gain it, is a permanent and true idea. Equally permanent and true is the idea that there are some things that cannot be attained except by self-sacrifice, and that self-sacrifice is a part of the divine life, as it is a part of human life. No idea of God is very exalted which does not include that in it. Equally true is the permanent idea that sin is a

dreadful thing, not to be got over easily and simply, but that a price must be paid for it in the soul of every man.

On the other hand, there are ideas in all these theories of the atonement which have now become not only unreal, but many of them obnoxious to the highest and best Christian feeling. Such is the idea that God needed to be changed in His attitude toward men. Such, also, is the idea that there are two qualities in God, love and justice, fighting against each other: and that what He would like to do He can not, and what He can do is not what He would like, until some sort of arrangement is made that gets Him out of this conflict, and on the road to doing what He wants to do. There are no two such abstractions in any person. We are also outgrowing the idea that any person can bear the sins of another person or even the punishment of them. The punishments of my sins are their results in my soul. By God's help I can in time and eternity overcome these, perhaps even build some of them into a higher and better good, but that they can be wiped out by what anybody, human or divine, can do outside of me and for me, is contrary to all our ideas of what the human spirit is.

We feel also that the death of Christ cannot be separated from His life, as the fathers used to separate it. Jesus could have escaped His death if He had wanted to. He did not escape it, because He would not be false to His convictions and to the people who had espoused his cause. What led to the death of Jesus was the kind of life He had lived. There is no indication that God planned or willed the death of Jesus any more than He desires any murder, judicial or otherwise, which ever has occurred in the world. Jesus died because He came into conflict with the aims and purposes of men who did not understand Him. If He could have escaped that conflict, if He had been born in some better circumstances, if He had been able to avoid this dilemma without harm to His inner life, He would have been the Son of God just as He was. At all events, we cannot separate the death of Jesus

from His life, and His death occurred according to purely natural and human laws, as the death of any other man in similar circumstances might have done.

Moreover, there is in these days, a great shifting of emphasis from the death of Jesus to His life. If we take into account, as did the Apostle Paul, only the death of Jesus, we miss the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin. We miss the great body of the teaching of Jesus, which is now as never before being studied and applied to all the circumstances of human life. It is a question whether these days we are not getting more spiritual help from the life of Jesus than from His death. There is, in particular, one great gain in this shifting of emphasis from the death of Jesus to His life. We have too long exalted the gloomy element in Christianity. There is one picture which I see occasionally in somebody's house, which requires a good deal of callousness to look at without being unduly depressed by it. It is the picture of Christ with the thorns around His head and the blood running down His face. For my part, I have seen too many images of Jesus hanging on the cross, and not enough pictures of Him mastering the crowd in Jerusalem and leading His disciples to victory and moral strength. I have seen Him as a merely suffering person until I don't wonder that there has been a gloomy tinge to the Christian religion. It is a great gain that we are coming to put the death of Jesus into the place where it belongs as an item in His life, and not as a thing separated and distinct, to be held up there before the face and eyes of all the world, time without end.

We are beginning, also, to see that Jesus Himself apparently knew nothing of all these elaborate theories of the atonement since He never said anything about them. The doctrine of the atonement seems to us, as we read the New Testament more carefully, to have much support from the Apostle Paul and other good men in the New Testament times, but little or no support from Jesus Himself.

One other thing is more important than any of these. We are coming back these days to the idea of God which Jesus Himself taught. That idea is, that God is our Father. The more you have of fatherhood, the less you need of atonement. You are a father, and your children have done something they ought not to do. What atonement do you need, except that they should come back to you and behave themselves as they ought to do? You are a father, and if you are a decent father, you do not harbor a grudge against your children. You do not attempt to figure up how much they owe you, and collect of them. If God is like Jesus Christ, there is one thing that is always easy for God. That one thing He never does have, never did have, never will have any trouble about; and that is, the matter of forgiveness. It is hard for you to forgive, because you are not as big or as good as you ought to be. But if God is like Jesus Christ, then the easiest thing in the world for God is to forgive. That was the one thing Jesus did everywhere. Whenever a man came and said, "Won't you heal me?" the first thing Jesus said was, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." If God is like Jesus, He doesn't require any apparatus, any arrangement, anything of any sort, to forgive. He delights to forgive, He is always ready to forgive, He always can forgive, and there isn't anything else in all the world that is so easy and so natural for Him, or that comes so inevitably out of His heart as forgiveness.

While there are, therefore, true and permanent ideas which underlie all conceptions of the atonement, I believe that the time has come when any of the old forms of the doctrine are more of a handicap than a help. They stand in the way of more men than they assist. The time has come when there are other interpretations of the life of Jesus that are more natural and helpful than the interpretation of His life in terms of an atonement. We think, these days, of Jesus Christ as the great and wonderful revelation of God. We turn to Him to see what God is like. What most of us need is not so much to be reconciled to God, as to understand God, to know where to look for

God, to know how to think about God, to know how we can co-operate with Him, and how we ought to feel as we come to Him.

The idea of Christ as the great revelation of God, the great ideal of mankind, the great spiritual leader and teacher and head of the human race, and the companion of every devout and believing spirit, is, for practical purposes, worth more these days to the average man than the interpretation of Christ in terms of an atonement. When the soldier saw the vision of "Christ in Flanders," or when Robert Schaufler wrote his poem about "The White Comrade," where the soldier in No Man's Land is wounded, and feels himself taken up in someone's arms, sees a little wound in the hand of this person, looks down and sees a wound in each of His feet, and then a red spot on His white garment, and says to Him, "Have you been wounded?" and the White Companion says, "These are old wounds, but of late they have troubled Me anew," the picture which the poet has of Jesus Christ is not of an atoning sacrifice, but a great, loving, divine companion of the human spirit, who now and forever, like God Himself, will go out into danger to bring home the friend whom He loves.

When one of our modern poets says:

"I cannot think nor reason,
I only know He came
With hands and feet of healing,
And wild heart all aflame.
I only know He loves me,
Enfolds and understands,
And oh, His face that holds me,
And oh, His certain hands,"

he is not thinking of Christ as an atonement, but as the spiritual comrade who comes with a great uplift and saving power. When another says:

"There is One whom I have loved so much,
I am no more the same,

I give thanks for His transforming touch,
I tell you not His name.
He has become a sign to me,
For flowers and for fire;
For songs He is a sign to me
And for the broken lyre.
And I have known Him in a book
And never touched His hand"—

he is not thinking of Christ as an atonement, but as one who comes to him across the passage of the years—divine, benignant and wonderful, a companion for his spirit.

The simple fact is that Jesus Christ is too large, too sublime, too many-sided a figure to be caught within the compass of any one conception. Jesus Christ is the permanent possession of the Christian world and the Christian Church. Interpretations of Him come and go, but He abides. If there are any of you who cannot formulate any doctrine of the atonement which is satisfactory to you, perhaps God has intended you to get along without any such doctrine. Perhaps He has intended that you should see in Jesus Christ, not so much the Lamb slain from the foundations of the earth, as the great companion and elder brother and spiritual guide and leader of mankind. If He is that to you, is He not everything to you?

CHAPTER V.

Salvation

The simplest idea of salvation, found earliest in the Christian religion, is that of rescue from future punishment, and from the hell in which future punishment occurs. This is not essentially a Christian idea. Hell and future punishment are found in every religion, practically, and there are many religions which have worked out much more elaborate doctrines concerning them than Christianity can boast of.

Among the Babylonians, the idea of future punishment, as of a future life in general, was vague and shadowy. The soul was thought of as going somewhere into an underworld abode, to which the grave was the entrance. When people were buried in caves, the cavern itself was naturally thought of as the entrance, or ante-chamber. But in this underworld, the souls lived a shadowy existence. They were shades or shadows, rather than real spirits. They fed, said the Babylonians, on dust and mud, and they lived in the dark—a kind of spiritless and purposeless, half-conscious existence.

The Persians advanced the idea of a future life, somewhat. They said there was a bridge, across which the spirit of every dead man had to pass. For a good man this bridge became wide, miles wide, so he could not fall off of it if he tried. But for a bad man it got very narrow, as narrow as the edge of a knife, and he couldn't stay on it, but plunged into the abyss below. But all they said concerning the abyss below was that souls were crowded inconceivably close in it, and yet it was so dark that every soul felt itself to be utterly alone. Yet the Persians had devised some very ingenious punishments for hell. A woman who had too sharp a tongue was consigned to licking a red-hot stove. The merchant who had weighed too much

dirt and stone with his potatoes and onions spent his other world life in weighing stones and dust and ashes.

The Egyptians had a better defined idea of hell. Osiris, king of the dead, met every soul that departed this life. Surrounded with his forty-two associate judges, he weighed each one in a steelyard against an ostrich feather. The fate of the soul that did not balance right is suggested by the fact that by the side of Osiris sat a mythical monster, with the body of a hippopotamus and the mouth of a crocodile, the mouth very large and very wide open.

Hindooism extended the idea of hell and future punishment until it had twenty-eight hells. Each hell had a kind of punishment peculiar to itself. In one hell people were burned, in another they wandered forever through a forest where the leaves of the trees were sharp as knives; in a third hell they walked over a plain, paved with sharp spikes; in another they were pinched with red-hot pincers.

But in the ancient world, the Buddists reached the highest development of ingenuity in regard to future punishment. If you have ever felt it was hard to be a Christian because you had to believe in hell, you should congratulate yourself that you are not a Buddhist. For to be a good, orthodox Buddhist, you would have to believe in eight cold hells and eight hot ones, and in subsidiary hells gathered around these hot and cold ones, until you came to a total of some one hundred and thirty-six different hells.

If any of us, ignorant of what has been thought in other parts of the world and other times, may think we have, as Christians, a monopoly on the idea of hell and future punishment, we should lay any such pride resolutely aside. Among all the great religions of mankind, Christianity has the least developed idea of hell and future punishment.

And such ideas as Christianity has on these subjects are not, most of them, original with her. She borrowed most of them from the religions of Greece and Rome. In the Grecian religion, the future life was full of terrors; there was a place

filled with mire, a lake, perhaps of blood, in which people wallowed; there was Tantalus, chained to a rock and dying of hunger within reach of plenty; Sisyphus, pushing his heavy rock to the top of the hill, only to see it tumble again to the bottom; there were men who had been flayed alive and boiled and roasted. The horrors of the future life Christianity borrowed mostly from the Grecian religion, improving upon them now and then as she could.

In comparatively humane times like ours we hear little about these things. To find the doctrine of hell at its height, one should go back to the middle ages, when the imagination of the monks of Christendom played without any restraint upon this matter of future punishment. The devil sat on the red-hot gridiron, chained in red-hot chains; and never consumed, in spite of the heat, but provided with a body which enabled him to be burned endlessly. He sat there on the gridiron, but his hands were loose, and with his claws waving in the air he caught at every lost soul that came by him. Each lost soul, as he caught it, he put into his mouth and it went down through his gullet into the abyss. One may learn, also, from the literature that comes from the monks of the middle ages, that the fire which burns in hell is a fire mingled with sulphur, which gives its unbearable stench and that it gives no light, so that in spite of all the heat, the souls tormented by it are in perfect darkness.

I have said enough,—a very little about a great subject, but enough to show you there is no subject upon which the imagination of mankind has played more freely, or one might say, with a more fiendish pleasure than this terrible subject of hell and future punishment. One thing, however, Christianity added to the terror of the world that is to come. It added the idea of endlessness. The Persians said that the fire that burned in hell would ultimately purify, not only all the souls that were there, but hell itself, fitting it to be a permanent and enduring part of the universe. The Hindoos and Buddhists said that after one had been in hell a certain length of time,

he came out and entered the soul of a snake or frog or man or animal of some other sort. To these older peoples, hell was a temporary affair, terrible enough, but after all it came to an end. Christendom added to the horrors of hell the idea of its eternity.

I do not need to say that there has been a great revulsion from all this medievalism and cruelty in these recent days of ours. We believe in punishment; and no man who has ever done anything wrong needs to be reminded that there is a punishment for every sin. You bear in your mind and your body, in your soul and in your nervous organism, the punishment of every sin you have ever committed; as, thank God, you also bear in them the reward of every self-sacrifice and every struggle after goodness. We do not need to be told that everything wrong brings its penalty. The penalty is part of the wrong itself. We do not need to be told that this penalty can never be escaped. We know that only too well.

We do not think, however, of future punishment as something essentially different from present punishment. The punishment of being a liar right now, today, is that you are a liar, and people do not believe you. It is not, today, that you will have your tongue cut out, and it will not be in the world to come. We think of punishment in the world to come as being similar in kind to the punishment that comes to us for the wrong we do today. For my own part, I think the time has come to lay aside, definitely and with a perfectly clear idea of what we are doing and why we do it, all these medieval and heathen notions of hell and eternal punishment. I do not wish to rob any of you of an idea out of which you can get personal satisfaction, or any comfort for your neighbors or friends or children. But for my part, I do not believe for one moment in eternal punishment. It is not merely that it misrepresents God and enthrones cruelty at the heart of the universe, but it is that it makes the whole universe such an absurd affair. For if God has even the wisdom that a man has, He has no business to make a universe in which the larger part of the finest product

of it is good for nothing except to be burned up. I do not object to anybody holding this idea of future endless punishment out of mere conservatism. If you have been taught it as a child, and cannot get away from it if you try, I am sorry about it. I wouldn't be impatient with you for that. But I would say that any man who consciously adopts, and strives to justify, and spends his life instilling into the minds of other people, an idea which makes God a monster and an incompetent, has wasted his time, to put it as mildly as it can be put. Let's get rid of these heathen notions.

We have plenty of things to be saved from right here and now. And if we are saved from these things today, we shall be saved from them tomorrow; if we are saved from them tomorrow, we shall be saved from them for the next day; if we are saved from them at the time we die, we shall be saved from them for whatever future there is for us. All this we can leave in the hands of God. We are not thinking much today about our fate in the future. The best Christian people I know, the most earnest, the most devout, the least censorious, the most charitable, are people who are conscious of their own sins and misdoings, but who are entirely content to leave all that in the future with God. Their interest right now is to be saved, not from the imaginary terrors of some other world, but from the absolutely real wrongs and sins of this one.

We want to be saved from sin. But sin is an abstract term. If you have just committed "sin" and no particular kind of sin, you haven't committed any sin at all. There is a good deal of talk about sin that does not strike home because it does not refer to any particular kind of sin. One can preach endlessly on the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," and not hit anybody. There are no sinners-at-large.

To particularize, then:—I'd like to be saved from the sin of meanness, so that I shall never take a small or unworthy view of any man's action or character, and so that it shall be impossible for me to be contemptible or small in my attitude

toward you or toward any human being. I'd like to be saved from bad temper, because folks with bad tempers are not liked by other people. They make a great deal of trouble and do very little good. I'd like to be saved from every kind of intemperance, because there is a normal way for people to live, and people who live in that normal way can do a great deal of good in the world, but people who make themselves slaves of their stomachs or nervous organisms are incapacitated from accomplishing anything. I'd like to be saved from impurity, because impurity is a kind of hell-fire itself, that burns in a man's mind and body this very moment if he has it, and goes on in his posterity for generations to come. I'd like to be saved from every kind of dishonesty, because the world is built upon honor, and the dishonest man is a nuisance in it and nobody will respect him.

To turn this all around, I'd like to be saved to self-respect, because it makes no difference to me what anybody else says in praise or compliment to me if I know it is not so. The judgment of God upon me is not what you say of me, but it is what I am obliged to say of myself. What is it to you if everybody else in the world respects you, because they don't know any better, if you, who know yourself, do not truly respect yourself? I'd like to be saved to usefulness. Everything in the world is here for some particular purpose. God didn't make any of us just to look in the glass and wear good clothes, and ride in big automobiles and have a good time. He put us here to be of some distinct usefulness and if you are not that, you condemn yourself utterly. You'd like to be saved to godliness. You are not here of your own invention. There is a great and infinite power in the world, and whoever lives in sympathy and co-operation with that power is a free and a good man, and whoever lives outside of it is a slave and a weakling, and you'd like to be saved to godliness. And you would like to be saved to character, because that is all there is of you, and if you haven't that, no matter what else you have, you are not there at all. You would like to be saved from every

particular kind of badness and sin to these particular kinds of goodness.

Now I want to ask you, (I don't ask you because you are theologians, and I don't want you to come at it from a theological or theoretical point of view, but from your experience in the world,) how are folks saved? How are we saved from these kinds of badness that I have spoken of to these kinds of goodness?

For my part, I think the first way in which, not speaking of children now, most of us are saved is by work. If you will pick me out a man who has never had to do anything in this world, who has never had any serious responsibilities placed upon him, who has never known the fatigue of toil, who has not come home at night exhausted, perhaps for long periods of time—and yet who has attained to any great degree of goodness or usefulness, I will believe in miracles in the present time. I have never known such a person, I don't believe there ever was one. For what character you have attained, and for what sins you have escaped, you are largely indebted to the fact that you have been busy; you have been occupied; you have had work to do. Most folks who go to the bad go there because they haven't anything else to do. The first thing that saves us is work.

The second thing that saves us is knowledge. None of us do quite as well as we know. Yet nine-tenths of the sin of ordinary people goes back to ignorance. I think of one man who was in general of good character, but who had done one thing that hung forever on his conscience. He went back once to the place where this terrible thing had happened, and meeting an old friend who knew all about it, he spoke of this wrong he had done, and how heavy it had been upon his heart for so many years. "As I look back on that now," said his friend, "it was pretty nearly pure ignorance." The sins we do because we haven't any more sense, oh, if God would somehow relieve us of those, we would come through fairly well! When Jesus said to His Father, "Father, forgive them.

They know not what they do," He not only expressed the divine forgiveness but told the absolutely human truth. They didn't know.

We are saved also by faith. We are saved by our faith in each other. When you put me, for instance, into this pulpit, and come here to hear me, and I know you have confidence enough in me to trust me with these sacred things that belong to the Church and to the religion of Jesus Christ, that in itself ought to make me ashamed if ever I told you any less than the truth, or fooled you, or trifled with you, or was unfaithful to you in any way. We are saved because people believe in us, and we are saved because we believe in other people. And we are saved still more because we believe in God and in Jesus Christ.

But good folks and bad folks alike know that the greatest power for the salvation of the human spirit is love. A boy who truly loves his father, if his father is a kind of man who ought to be loved, is held by one cord that will never break. The love of one good woman ought to be sufficient, and in general it is sufficient, to keep any ordinarily decent man from the sins that so easily beset us. But when a man feels a love in his heart not only for the folks who are close about him, but for all mankind, and when he goes one step beyond that and feels that at the heart of the universe there is a love that enfolds him, outside of which he never can stray, that is always seeking him, that is always ready to bear any sacrifice or pain in order that it may do him good, then that man has got hold of the greatest power for the salvation of the human soul that there is in the world. But that man has also got hold of religion, for that is what religion is. Religion, the conviction of a power at the heart of the universe, whom we call God, Who feels toward us in that same friendly and loving way that we feel when we are at our best toward the folks who are nearest and dearest to us, that is the power that works in us, most divinely and wonderfully of all, for our salvation. And that, again, we have learned from Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

Immortality

There was a time when people did not believe in immortality. All the great ideas of the world, like its great art and music and inventions, have come by struggle and by achievement. They have never dropped down out of the sky. So there was a time when people did not believe in immortality. In the early part of the Old Testament, people did not look forward to a life in the world to come. The promise of God to a good man was long life and happiness and success in this world. The old Hebrews believed in a sort of continuation of the soul, in a place down under the earth called Sheol, where the good and bad were mingled together, a sort of semi-conscious and purposeless existence without any activity. Of this world below the grave, the writer of Ecclesiastes said, "There is neither device nor knowledge nor love in the grave, whither thou goest." Job asked, "If a man die shall he live again?" And the tone in which he asked it indicated that he was doubtful, at least, about the answer.

When you come to the New Testament, immortality is taken for granted. It is rather a misfortune that the ancient Hebrew book in which the first perfectly clear and unmistakable utterance of belief in immortality is contained is not in our Protestant Bibles. In the Book of Ecclesiasticus one reads a passage which has no parallel in the Old or New Testament, and which it is a pity the average Christian does not hear read from the pulpit.

"The ungodly said within themselves, reasoning not aright, 'Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no healing when a man cometh to his end. Because by mere chance we were born, and hereafter we shall be as if we had never been. For

the breath in our nostrils is smoke, and our intelligence is a spark kindled by the beating of our heart, which, being extinguished, the body shall be turned into ashes and the spirit shall be dispersed into thin air, and our life shall pass away like the traces of a cloud!' Thus reasoned they, and were led astray, for their own ignorance had blinded them. For God created man to be immortal, and made him the image of His own eternity. In the eyes of the foolish they seem to die, and their departure is accounted to be misery, and their going from us to be their ruin. But they are in peace. For the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no evil touch them."

So, in the years just preceding the birth of the New Testament, and a few years earlier than that in Greece, under the leadership of Socrates and Plato, men had come to a firm conviction of immortality. After that, the disciples went through their experiences with Jesus, and especially the experience of the Resurrection, which convinced them that He who seemed to be dead was really alive, and instead of having finished His career, was just beginning to live His life in the hearts of men. And from that day to this, the doctrine of immortality has been the sure possession of all mankind. Now and then, a man on account of the character of his work or some peculiar twist to his mind, the training to which he has been subjected, or the circumstances of his life, may for a little time give up the belief in immortality. Yet the difference between the man who says he doesn't believe in immortality, and the man who says he does, is not so great as it might seem. For no man says he does not believe in immortality without a lingering hope in the back of his mind that what he says isn't true, and that the universe may be a more hopeful place than he for the moment sees it to be. When men for a time pass out of the hope of immortality, they usually come back into it again. No great and wonderful hope like this, that has been worked out by the experience of men, will ever be cast lightly and easily aside. If any of you are ever in a mood

to treat it so, I recommend to you the words of William Watson, entitled:

"To One Who Had Written in Derision of the Belief in Immortality:

"Dismiss not so, with light, hard phrase and cold,
Ev'n if it be but fond imagining,
The hope whereto so passionately cling
The dreaming generations from of old.
Not thus, to luckless men, are tidings told
Of mistress lost or riches taken wing;
And is eternity a slighter thing
To have or lose, than kisses or than gold?

Nay, tenderly, if needs thou must, disprove
My loftiest fancy, dash my grand desire
To see this curtain lift, these clouds retire,
And Truth, a boundless day-spring, blaze above
And 'round me; and to ask of my dead sire
His pardon for a word that wronged his love."

The idea of immortality is natural to men, as I have said. It did not drop down from heaven at any particular time. It is not natural, in the sense that your hands and feet with which you are born are, but natural in the sense in which music is natural to us, or art or literature, or any of the things which the human spirit has attained. It is natural in the sense that when you come to be a real man, and enter into the full inheritance of the race, you come also into the inheritance of this great and wonderful hope of immortality. And so, because it is a natural thing, it is not in the souls of the indifferent and the careless and the sluggish that it burns the brightest. If there are any men who do not really care anything about life, who have no zest and joy in it, it is no wonder the hope of immortality burns low in the souls of these men. The spirit of man is to us a thing so great, so strong, so inherently endowed with the right to live that we cannot think of its coming to an end, and it is only when a man can say with Robert Louis Stevenson:

"Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie,
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me;
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill,"

only when he has lived out of a full heart, and got the zest and joy and sweetness and the beauty of this life, has he got it in him to entertain that greatest and most wonderful of human hopes, the hope of the life that is to be.

And because the belief in immortality is a natural thing, and because we live a common place and ordinary life, a life among ordinary things, therefore it should not surprise us that things themselves, the right things, have a wonderful power to suggest to us the hope of the life eternal. I observe that when two of the disciples went with Jesus to the little town of Emmaus, they did not know Him, but they asked Him to stay and partake of a lunch with them; and when He took the loaf of bread in His hand and with some peculiar twist of His fine, strong arms, broke it apart, then their eyes were opened and they knew who He was. When He went back to Galilee and they saw Him there on the edge of the lake, they were out fishing, and He asked of them that commonest question of every man on the shore to every man fishing from a boat, "Have you caught anything?" and they said, "No." He said, "The fishing is better on the other side." They let their net down and filled it, and came to the shore and there He was kindling a fire; and something He did with the sticks, or the way He handled the materials they had seen Him handle so often, opened their eyes and they knew who He was. And so a poet has written:

"Music I heard with you was more than music,
And bread I broke with you was more than bread;

Now that I am without you, all is desolate;
All that was once so beautiful is dead,

Your hands once touched this table and this silver,
And I have seen your fingers hold this glass.
These things do not remember you, beloved,
And yet your touch upon them will not pass.

For it was in my heart you moved among them,
And blessed them with your hands and with your eyes;
And in my heart they will remember always,—
They knew you once, O beautiful and wise."

You wear a pin that your mother wore, you carry your father's watch or your father's pocket knife. You move among things that people have loved, and it comes to you again not merely that they once were and you loved them, and here is something reminding you of them; it comes to you that the great and wonderful force stored in them for a time is not dissipated, but somewhere lives on.

And as intimations of immortality come to us from things, so they come to us still more from places. We are not angels, but only men and women, and we are attached to the spots in which we live. I notice it was when the disciples went down to Galilee, not down in the big, dirty, noisy city of Jerusalem in which they were strangers, and to which they had not gotten accustomed, and which misunderstood them and crucified their Master, but when they went back to Galilee where everything they saw reminded them of Jesus, where they had sat under the limestone rock and broke the bread together, where they went out fishing on the lake,—it was back in Galilee where they had lived, not in the big city where He died, that they became convinced of the continued existence of Jesus.

"If there is any life when death is over,
These tawny beaches will know much of me,
I shall come back, as constant and as changeful,
As the unchanging, many-colored sea.

If life was small, if it has made me scornful,
Forgive me; I shall straighten life a flame
In the great calm of death, and if you want me
Stand on the sea-ward dunes and call my name."

Places bring back to us not only the spirit of those whom we have loved, but they point on for us to a land that is not here and to a life that is not yet. When I go back to the little town in which I was born and in which my father lived and died, and when I go up to the old house and back of it, under the oak trees at the head of Fuller's Marsh, I don't have to call his name, even, but somehow, out of the unknown, my father's spirit comes back and stands again beside me, strong and clean and inspiring as it was in other years, and I know that there is immortality for the souls of men.

No man ought to want to die. No good man, in his normal state, does want to die. The better a man is and the more truly godly and Christian, the more glad he ought to be to live as long as he can, and do the work of God in this world. For if God needs good men anywhere, it is not in heaven but here on earth. Let us cherish the joy and zest of life. On the other hand, we all miss getting the good thing we ought to have and that is due us because we are not quite willing to let go of the thing we are moving away from. These terrible people who are not willing to grow up, but want to be always children and after they get grown up are always regretting the passing of their childhood! These other people who are not willing to take on the sobriety and wisdom of old age, but continually by various devices try to deceive people into thinking them thirty or forty years younger than they are! I shall never get the good out of manhood unless I am ready to say I am no longer a young man. I can no longer do this and that and the other I used to do. I have passed out of that stage. "When I became a man," says Paul, "I put away childish things." So we must do with this world, and the next as well.

There was a great physician in Philadelphia, a few years ago, who has had a great reputation, and more men and women

owe peace of mind to him than to any other American physician —Dr. Weir Mitchell. He wrote these verses which he calls "Vespers":

"I know the night is near at hand;
The mists lie low on hill and bay,
The autumn leaves are dewless, dry;
But I have had the day.

Yes, I have had, dear Lord, the day;
When at Thy call I have the night,
Brief be the twilight as I pass
From light to dark, from dark to light."

And I don't know, speaking of that, that there is necessarily any dark, or even any twilight; for there is a light that has been shed over the pathway of all of us in this world. It is the master light of all our seeing. We all came into this world without any more idea of what we should find here than we now have of what we shall find in the world that is to come. But this one thing we found! There was a light which we ourselves did not create or hold aloft, but which was held aloft by those about us. It was the light of love.

"If I can bear your love like a lamp before me
When I go down the long, steep road of darkness,
I shall not fear the everlasting shadows,
Nor cry in terror.

If I can find out God, then I shall find Him.
If none can find Him out, I shall sleep soundly,
Knowing how well on earth your love sufficed me,
A lamp in darkness."

Oh, yes, except that love is not a lamp which a man carries through a dark world, and by which he can see a little way around and before him. No, love is to the spirit of man what the sun is to the earth, dispelling the night and bringing

the everlasting day. And, as this love came ahead of us when we came into this world, and shone upon our path before we were wise enough to understand it or know what it was, so that love is shining in the world that is to come, and there shall be no darkness at all.

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